

# Reaching All Families

RMC Research Corporation  
2003

# Objectives:

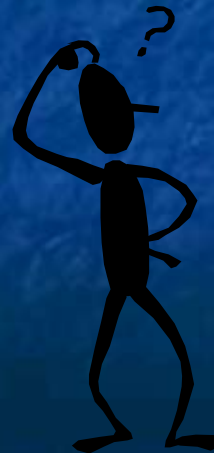
- To increase understanding of the possible barriers to family involvement.
- To provide strategies for outreach to overcome these barriers.

# Picture This:

It is an evening parent involvement meeting. About 15 parents are in the library. Ms. Janeway, the fifth grade teacher, looks around and exclaims, "The parents that need to be here didn't come! I'm doing everything I can, but it's not working."

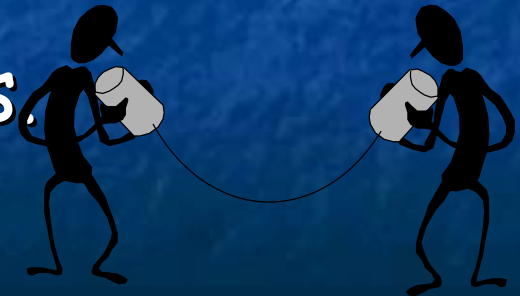
# Reflection

- What factors might Ms. Janeway be overlooking?
- What factors can prevent parents from responding to school outreach?



# Directions for Activity #1:

- As a group, discuss hurdles to family involvement.
- Agree on 3 to present to the entire group.
- Write these on your flip chart paper
- Report the group's results.



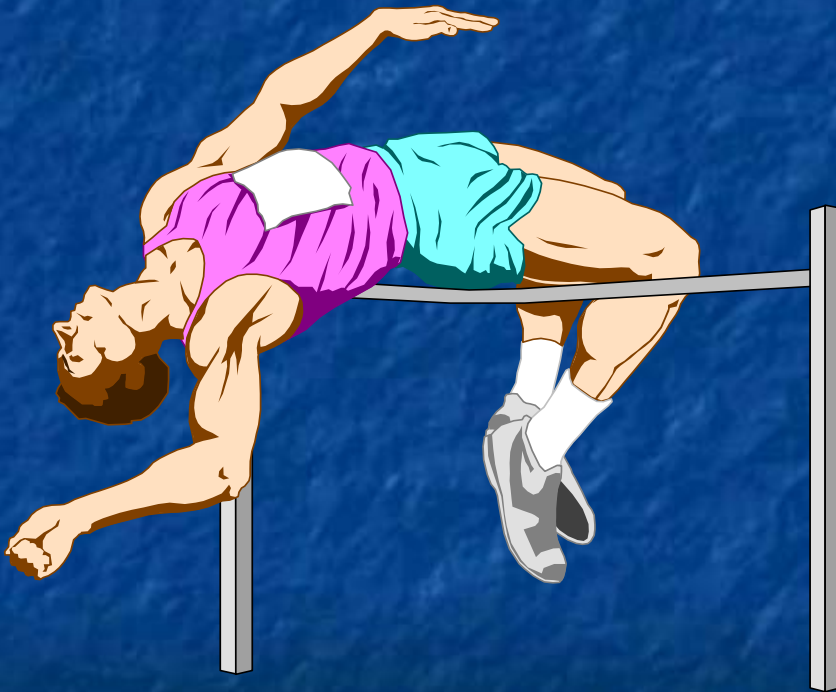
# Hurdles to Family Involvement

National PTA Survey Results (1992):

- Lack of time
- Feeling intimidated
- Feeling that they have nothing to contribute
- Not understanding the system
- Lack of childcare
- Language barriers

- Cultural differences.
- Lack of transportation.
- Not feeling welcome.
- Low level of literacy.
- Use of jargon.
- Scheduling conflicts and difficulties.

# Key Question



- How do we jump these hurdles to increase family and community involvement?

# Successful Local Practices to Promote Family Involvement:

- Overcome time and resource constraints.
- Provide information and training.
- Restructure schools to support family involvement.
- Bridge school-family differences.
- Tap external support for family-school partnerships.

(Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997)

# Ideas for Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints

- Use Title I funds to hire a part time parent coordinator
- Use parent volunteers to staff lunch and recess to free teachers to meet with parents
- Use Title I funds to compensate teachers for conducting parent workshops

- Establish homework hotlines or voice mail for parents
- Provide transportation or child care so that parents can attend meetings
- Hold meetings near family's homes
- Provide "take out" volunteer activities that parents can accomplish from home.

# Ideas for Providing Information and Training to Parents and Staff

- Provide parenting workshops
- Provide workshops that will increase parents' skills
- Conduct activities that help parents support learning at home
- Send frequent progress reports
- Plan times when parents and their children can learn together

- Prepare parents to participate in school decision-making
- Teach parents how to volunteer effectively
  - Volunteer handbooks
  - Office procedures
  - Confidentiality
  - School policies

- Use parent volunteers to make home visits to inform families about social services offered throughout the community
- Teach staff about strategies that lead to better relationships with parents

# Ideas for Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

- Encourage parent involvement in decision-making for:
  - Scheduling
  - School improvement plans
  - School policies

- Develop a parent resource center
- Hold a “Walk for Success” into neighborhoods
- Invite parents to staff retreats
- Become a “full service” school

# Ideas for Bridging School-Family Differences

- Use the telephone to communicate with non-reading parents
- Provide translation services
- Ensure that all school-home communications are published in dominant languages
- Hold workshops in parents' first language

- Honor cultural differences
- Provide information on cultural differences

# Ideas for Tapping External supports for Partnerships

- Tap dental and other health care volunteers
- Tap hairdressers and barbers for free haircuts
- Tap colleges for GED courses for parents
- Tap employers for released time so parents can attend functions and volunteer at schools

- Tap statewide supports such as Communities in Schools, a Texas organization or Parent Involvement Resource Centers (PIRCs)

- "The urge to form partnerships, to link up in collaborative arrangements, is perhaps the oldest, strongest, and most fundamental force in nature. There are no solitary, free living creatures: every form of life is dependent on other forms."
- (Lewis Thomas, Biologist)